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Relatives Praise Jonestown, Gy

Recently Peoples Temple held a press conference to let the public hear about Jonestown, Guyana, from people who had just returned from a visit with their relatives at the Agricultural Project. Rev. John V. Moore, former superintendent of United Methodist Churches of Northern California, and his wife, Mrs. Barbara Moore, spent several days with their two daughters and grandson in Jonestown. They came from their home in Reno, Nev., to relate to the public the great beauty and accomplishment of the thriving community in Guyana. The Moores are not members of Peoples Temple. They visited Guyana at their own expense, and traveled to San Francisco from Reno at their own expense for the press conference.

Rev. Moore said, "I'm John Moore, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Reno, Nevada. The two words that come to my mind as I tried to reflect upon my experience (of Jonestown) were 'impressive' and 'amazing.' It boggles the mind to see that great clearing (of land) and to understand how so much could have been done in such a relatively short period of time. I think almost a thousand acres have been cleared, and most of it has already been planted with various crops.

"I had a feeling of freedom. Neither in Georgetown, with 25 or 30 people coming and going all the time with total freedom, nor at the project itself did I have any feeling that anybody was being restrained or coerced or intimidated in any way."

When asked whether people told him they were happy, he responded, "It was so obvious. We talked about what they were doing, and all of them were engaged in some activities or work that was particularly important for them. We talked to anybody and everybody we wanted to, and we wore ourselves out walking around the facility. We went to the piggery, the chickery, the dairy, the sawmill, the cassava mill, the nursery."

Rev. Moore went on to tell about the day care nursery, the accredited school, and a health facility that is "the best facility in that whole region in Guyana." Rev. and Mrs. Moore commented on the "beauty" of the inclusion of older people in the community life, and the library with more than 8,000 volumes, where old and young read for pleasure or do research. Mrs. Moore described both the medical and the educational services as "excellent" (one of the Moores' daughters is a nurse, the other is a teacher), and went on to speak of the project as a whole as "a community of caring and sharing with the added dimension of love. In a sense it reminds me of a New Testament community," she reflected, "in the purest sense of the word, in the love and concern for all. It is a beautiful, heroic, creative project. It is absolutely miraculous." One newscaster commented Mrs. Moore seemed very impressed and asked would she describe it as "utopian." "Yes," she answered, "it's a lovely utopia."

Other specifics were provided as well about the lifestyle and quality of life in Jonestown: "It is a cooperative...Food is provided for everyone. There's medical care for everyone, and educational opportunities for everyone. There are work needs and opportunities for the members of the community. One of the great things is the opportunity, for some of the younger people particularly, to be learning skills when that opportunity is not present here."

Mrs. Moore added that the housing is well suited to the specific needs of the residents. "It's a complete city, and one thing they do encourage is the nuclear family. You can choose to have your own home, or, if you're a single person, you may live in a dormitory, whichever you prefer. The older folks have their neat little yards and white picket-type fences, with the opportunity to garden, or just sit." Attorney Charles Garry, who was also present, added that, when he visited, he saw them put up a cottage in one day, from the ground on up ready for occupancy.

Garry concluded with remarks about the medical center in Jonestown, headed by a young doctor who was put through medical school by Peoples Temple and who graduated with high honors. He said that he was particularly impressed with "the senior citizens' cottages right around the (medical) compound." They are looked in on by medical helpers first thing every morning. "Medical services are provided free to every resident on the project, and extensive clinic work is done in the surrounding community. The medical compound is something you have never seen, and you probably won't see it unless you go there. It's almost a miracle."

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